

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 9, 2008

Boards and Commissions Room, City Hall

6:00pm - 8:00pm

SPAB Members Present: Celeste Gilman, Chair; Ben Smith, Vice-Chair; Mark Bandy; Howard Wu; Petaki Cobell, Get Engaged; Tom Williams; Chris Tachibana, Secretary

Also present: Jim Curtin, SDOT liaison to SPAB, Peg Staeheli former SPAB member, Brian Lee (SBAB Liaison), Jacob Strusma (Feet First), Jen Cole (Feet First), Jon Morgan (public)

Absent: Paul Niebanck, T. Frick McNamara, Mary Lou Siebert

1. Introductions and approval of November and December Meeting approval (6:05)

2. Public Comment (6:06)

Jacob commented that 15th Ave NE is difficult to walk on with narrow sidewalks, streets, grass, garbage. Chris, Ben and Jacob discussed how there are a lot of bus stops on 15th, the south end has wide sidewalks, although south of Pacific has a sidewalk interruption and it gets progressively worse going north. Celeste will check if it's addressed in the University Area Transportation Action Strategy.

3. Presentation: Update on Sidewalk Prioritization by Jim Curtin (6:10)

Jim's PowerPoint slides will be on the SPAB website.

Inventory was conducted by eight SDOT field teams with GPS and GIS PDAs, entering data and taking digital photos covering 46,040 block faces. (Block face is the part that faces the street, so two block faces per street). Block faces were evaluated for criteria like width, material, landscaping, curb type and ramps.

They found that Seattle has:

Improved sidewalks (paved) 72%

Unimproved (dirt, gravel or no walkway) 12,262 segments

Undetermined (under construction or map errors) 1%

Mark and Ben asked about long blocks. They are still counted as one block face. even if with no cross-streets on one side. These, along with freeway on ramps and boulevards with medians are counted as unimproved block faces. He asked about freeways and the viaduct. These are also on the survey, even though they aren't considered for sidewalks.

Howard asked about pedestrian refuge islands and parallel trails. Islands are in the inventory but parallel trails are not, even though they are often used instead of sidewalks.

Inventory data are now in GIS form, allowing identification of the main areas that are lacking in improved sidewalks, e.g. N of 85th, pockets of SE Seattle, SODO, Duwamish, Delridge, Arbor Heights. Improvements are estimated to cost \$33 per square foot for a total of \$995 million, or \$25 million per year over 40 years, or \$12.4 over 80 years. Added to this is repairs to existing sidewalks, bringing the estimated total to \$2818 million.

Jen asked the life expectancy of a sidewalk, which Jim estimated at 75-80 years.

Mark and Jim discussed the estimated 200-year pace to address all block faces, based on 2002-2007 data. The number of required Bridging the Gap-sized funding packages would be a good way to measure. Jim said not all areas should have sidewalks, like freeways wouldn't be addressed, and Ben pointed out that some, like 520, are the state's responsibility.

Sixty-five percent of sidewalks are missing curb ramps and only 21% are ADA compliant. Brian asked about counting them. Each block has potentially three, one at each end and one mid-block. The other ramps on the corner belong to the cross-street. Ben, Mark, Jim and Jacob discussed non-standard ramps, like those diagonal to the intersection. SDOT is considering these and the controversial truncated domes. Celeste asked how to comment on domes and ramps. Jim said they are now looking at ADA standards so SPAB could have input when they have completed the draft standards document.

Jim had a handout with updated prioritization criteria and point values. Changes include giving 25 points to all unimproved sidewalks in urban villages, to reflect the need for connections to and from arterials. Point values for street types were lowered. Housing density in or out of urban villages is still important. Other priorities are destinations (schools, transit); areas with target user populations like low auto ownership or senior citizens as determined from census data; missing links or network extensions.

Jim went over how prioritization occurs in practice with GIS, first linking street types to sidewalk data. Multi-family housing assignment was included based on updated parcel use data. Urban Villages were marked, including a one-block buffer. Networks extensions were filled in. Scoring issues, arising from overlapping data or GIS quirks, were corrected as detected and will be addressed for 2009 prioritization. Results from the prioritization should be announced this week and comments will be welcome.

Ben asked about sidewalk improvement during private development and Jim said they are working with the permits division. Howard, Jim and Mark discussed how

sidewalk prioritization definitions fit to the Right of Way manual. Aside from street types, the definitions are the same.

Celeste asked about the timeline and fit to Complete Streets, paving projects, etc. Jim said a work plan for the next several years, updated yearly with new GIS data, will be made. Some data, like Aurora, are part of capital improvements. The goal is to get some large projects going. Some projects are to be done in 2008.

Ben asked about areas already improved, which are taken off the list and partnership projects, which SDOT will look at also. Brian asked about large areas with no sidewalks, which would probably be covered first on one side then going back to the other. Celeste said pedestrian generator areas need sidewalks on both sides, although it isn't as important on connectors to those areas. Howard asked about updating. SDOT and private projects will be tracked. Mark brought up a newsletter from Howard's firm about mitigation programs, which could be applied to the new GIS data to determine how projects could pay for sidewalks.

Jacob asked about widening the 6 feet guideline in areas with parking meters, trees, sandwich boards etc. Jim said in some areas more than 6 feet is required. Jon asked about adding vs. retrofitting curb ramps. Jim said more info will follow from the curb ramp specialists, but will probably be based on need.

Celeste and Mark asked if geographic balance is a good priority when there are huge imbalances in the areas with sidewalk deficiencies. This issue is being discussed right now on a case by case basis for the 2008 work plan, considering fairness. Petaki asked why north Seattle has so few sidewalks, which is part of the history of their incorporation from King County.

Since Jim said Arbor Heights did not score high, Peg asked about corridors to pedestrian destinations. Jim said it might be possible to cover this in other programs like Safe Routes to Schools. Ben pointed out that this would lead to higher scores in later surveys.

The next steps are moving to survey and design, bids for private contractors and then construction.

4. Round Robin (7:30)

Chris thanked Tom for taking minutes and everyone for keeping her informed while away. She agreed with Howard, Fiona and T on all comments about the streetcar, after the walkability tour Howard arranged. Signage is needed. She'd be interested in helping to write SPAB or SBAB advisories.

Brian reported on SBAB's streetcar tour. They are preparing a report to correct rumors about opposition to the streetcar from SBAB, and focus on incorporating bicycle needs into plans for extensions.

Howard reinforced the need for signage and branding for the streetcars, and considering functions within the car, such as bike loading and an off-board ticket buying system to save time and space on-board. Jacob had a friend who broke a cane on the tracks and sent an email to the city.

Mark is looking into the mitigation program mentioned above. Combining SDOT, DPD and GIS would be highly useful for policy discussions and examples. Celeste suggested contacting Tony Mazzella in SDOT planning.

On the streetcar tour, Tom noticed both car drivers and trolley drivers not stopping at 4-ways, especially at Terry. He called Metro and is waiting for a response. He went to a Downtown Seattle Association's Safe and Healthy Streets Taskforce meeting. They have data since 1999 on pedestrian issues downtown. They have noticed the 1811 Eastlake project has decreased reports of public civility issues like inebriation. This has saved \$1.8 million in services.

Jim brought a state parking sign with a prototype rubber gasket made by Elon Industries of Vancouver around the sharp edge, and requested comments. Petaki and Jacob said the signs without rubber edges are hazards.

Jen asked if SPAB had addressed crossing guards. Peg said we wrote an advisory letter the last time they were dropped from the budget. Ben said it was on the list for Pedestrian Master Plan scoping. Jen would like to be part of any presentations or conversations.

Brian reported that SBAB had their annual retreat and elected new officers. He will continue to be SPAB liaison. Proposals for ProWalk-ProBike are due 1 Feb. They have been considering a proposal on advisory boards and will get us involved if they do. He asked about progress on the Seattle Police Dept meetings. Celeste and Barbara Gray met with Officers Brown and Gracy in November. She would like to have SPAB and SBAB meet with the SPD as well.

Celeste got a business to move their sandwich board away from curb ramps. She was interviewed by a P-I reporter about pedestrian rights, policies, and the SPAB work plan. Public draft of the University Area Transportation Action Strategy will be out in February. WSDOT is doing a health impact study for 520. She gave out a draft work plan for comments to be approved soon.

Tom asked about board recruitment. Celeste said five candidates have been forwarded to the Mayor and Council. Jim said he discussed candidates with the Mayor's board liaison. The Mayor's selection will be made 17 Jan, other candidates will then go to the City Council.

Petaki noticed downtown has become cleaner and safer, but street people and public inebriation seems to be increasing in the south end. She's going to check if this has resulted in increasing crime. Jim, Celeste, Ben and Tom said the "toothpaste tube" phenomenon is real so that's why facilities that house people work so well.

Ben reported on the news story that the governor budgeted \$1.7 million toward a historically accurate ped safety fence on the Aurora Bridge. He took the foot ferry to Port Townsend. He noticed the south end of the street car has 5 different names.

5. Upcoming agenda (8:05):

Next meeting:

Sound Transit

Paul on the Ped Master Plan

6. Adjourn (8:05)